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'Upright, Whole, and Free': Eschatological Union with God[1]

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Abstract: In the closing canto of the *Purgatorio* in his *Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri describes the souls preparing to enter heaven as "new, remade, reborn, … perfect, pure, and ready for the Stars [i.e., heaven]." But what exactly would it mean for a human soul to be morally perfect and in perfect union with the divine will? Furthermore, if the soul fit for heaven is perfectly united with God, what sense does it make to think that individual retains their free will? In this paper, I assume a number of Christian claims about the Beatific Vision and argue that not only do the souls fit for heaven retain their freedom, but that they are in sense 'more free' despite their inability to do certain actions.

Keywords: Free will, Moral character, Heaven, Beatific vision, Divine freedom

1. Introduction: Dante and the Problem of Heavenly Freedom

Like many others, I find Dante's *Divine Comedy* to be a rich theological and philosophical resource. One aspect of this work that I'm especially interested in is Dante's account of free will and character formation in the *Purgatorio* (for related work, see Timpe 2013, particularly chapter 2, and Timpe 2017).

In Cantos XVI through XVIII of the middle *cantiche*, Dante gives an extended discussion of the evil found in the world. Dante's primary concern isn't to present a theodicy or defense, as much as some philosophers might like him to. Rather, his primary task there is to describe what he takes to be the origin of this evil. (I take it one can give an account of the origin of something without attempting to justify its existence, even though the two tasks are related.) Dante the character askes his guide Virgil, who personifies wisdom:

> The world, as you have said, is truly bare

[1] Portions of this paper are drawn from earlier work, most notably Pawl and Timpe (2009), and Pawl and Timpe (2013).

of every trace of good; swollen with evil;
by evil overshadowed everywhere.

But wherein lies the fault? I beg to know
that I may see the truth and so teach others (XVI.58ff).[2]

As with many theodicies and defenses, Dante locates the source of evil in free will. We'll see below how it is that Dante understands the nature of free will. But it is because we have free will, so understood, that Dante thinks it is just for us to be punished (or, for those of us that make it to the *Paradiso*, rewarded) for our actions and our character:

Mankind sees in the heavens alone the source
of all things, good and evil; as if by Law [i.e., divine decree]
they shaped all mortal actions in their course.

If that were truly so, then all Free Will
would be destroyed, and there would be no justice
in giving bliss for virtue, pain for evil (XVI.67ff).

It seems to me, and to many Dante scholars, that in these and other cantos Dante denies the truth of theological determinism—the view that God actively wills everything that happens. Instead, from what I can tell, Dante is usually interpreted as endorsing a form of libertarianism, the view that free will exists but is incompatible with the truth of causal or theological determinism. According to Dante, if our actions are determined by anything outside of ourselves, then we fail to be moral agents:

If love springs from outside the soul's own will,
it being made to love, what merit is there
in loving good, or blame in loving ill? (XVIII.42ff).

Like for Aquinas, whose theological views had a profound influence on the poet, for Dante the will is an appetite for the perceived good—that is, the will is naturally drawn to what we think is good.

The soul, being created prone to Love,
is drawn at once to all that pleases it,
as soon as pleasure summons it to move (XVIII.19ff).

[2] All citations are taken from Dante/Ciardi (2003).

Humans sin when we love things inappropriately.[3] Sin and vice are most fundamentally a perversion of love.

> But when it [i.e, love] turns to evil, or shows more
> or less zeal than it ought for what is good,
> then the creature turns on its Creator.
>
> Thus you may understand that love alone
> is the true seed of every merit in you,
> and of all acts for which you must atone (XVII.100ff).

Ultimately, what we love—the good that moves us—is up to us; that is, it's an expression of our free will.

What is interesting is that Dante also thinks that humans can love perfectly, in a way that is free but nevertheless cannot give rise to sin. Immediately before the previously quoted lines from canto XVII of the *Purgatorio*, Dante writes:

> Natural love may never fall to error.
> The other may, by striving to bad ends,
> or by too little, or by too much fervor.
>
> While it desires the Eternal Good [happiness] and measures
> its wish for secondary goods in reason,
> this love cannot give rise to sinful pleasures (XVII.94ff).

Additionally, upon Dante's arrival in the earthly paradise after being purged of the capital vices on the seven cornices, Dante no longer has need for his guide Virgil, who departs with the following words:

> Expect no more of me in word or deed:
> here your will is upright, free, and whole,
> and you would be in error not to heed
>
> whatever your own impulse prompts you to:
> lord of yourself I crown and mitre you (XXVII.139ff).

In what follows, I'll refer to those who, like Dante upon reaching the earthly paradise, are "upright, free, and whole" and perfectly united with God in the Beatific Vision—these are 'the redeemed'. These passages can be seen as raising a tension, one that's

[3] This is an Augustinian theme found not just in Dante but also at the heart of Smith (2016) and Stump (2010).

certainly not unique to Dante, between two claims regarding the redeemed. The first of these is that moral evil is rooted in the misuse of creaturely free will; and the second is the claim that in the eschaton, the redeemed are morally perfect in a way that precludes the ability to sin. This is what Tim Pawl and I have referred to elsewhere as 'the Problem of Heavenly Freedom' (Pawl and Timpe 2009, 397).

2. Concession Strategies

In the next few sections of this paper, I want to briefly treat a number of ways that one might avoid the tension I've noted here in Dante. A number of these are what Tim Pawl and I have dubbed 'concession strategies' (Pawl and Timpe 2009, 400).

Before turning to these, however, a note about the scope of this discussion. As will become clear, this discussion isn't intended to be exhaustive, and in two ways. First, it's not exhaustive with regard to its breadth. There are other options than those that I consider here. One could, for instance, adopt compatibilism; but all the views that I'm here going to consider are, like I think Dante's view should be understood, views which involve a libertarian understanding of human freedom. Second, the present discussion also isn't exhaustive in terms of depth. There are certainly ways that one could seek to further defend some of the views that I'll consider but reject; a definitive treatment will have to await another time.

"Upright and whole, but not free"

One way to avoid the Problem of Heavenly Freedom, and the tension between human freedom and heavenly sinlessess, is to affirm the latter and reject (or limit) the former to as a result. On this approach, one affirms that while humans have free will, and thus the possibility of sinning, in the present life, those that are among the redeemed no longer have such an option. On this option, free will may not be present once a person is 'fit for heaven' in the way that Dante thinks *Purgatorio* accomplishes. He refers to Purgatory as "that second kingdom given / the soul of man wherein to purge its guilt / and so grow worthy to ascend to Heaven" (1.4–6). The moral perfection that makes one's character worthy of perfect union with God in the afterlife could perhaps be accomplished in a way that doesn't require purgatorial purging. It's possible, for instance, that the process of moral perfection is accomplished in a person at or after death by a unilateral act of God. At the relevant time (and the exact timing need to concern us too much as present), God simply 'zaps' a perfected moral character into the person such that their future continued union with God is guaranteed by an inability to sin. This is what we can call 'the Zap view' of moral perfection, since God *zaps* our volitional structure such that all of our desires are brought into harmonious alignment with heavenly perfection. Neal Judisch argues that "God cannot simply 'zap' us with a sanctifying ray and unilaterally

bestow a radically altered nature upon us all in one go" (Judisch 2009, 170). Whether God could do this would depend on complex questions related to divine power. But even if divine power is such that God *could* do this, it would come at a significant cost since the 'zap' would undermine human freedom. And this would raise the question of why God had given his creation such freedom in the first place, particularly given the kind of evil that free will not only allows for but has actually brought about.

Stewart Goetz endorses a view of this sort, despite appealing to the value of a libertarian understanding of free will elsewhere. Goetz denies that "free will is an intrinsic good and, hence, *its absence in heaven* is not problematic or puzzling" (2009, 196 note 40). But here he's up against a robust historical pedigree. In exploring the nature of the redeemed in his magisterial *City of God*, Augustine claims that eschatological union with God would be less good if humans lacked free will there:

> Neither are we to suppose that because sin shall have no power to delight them [i.e., the redeemed], free will must be withdrawn. It will, on the contrary, be all the more truly free, because set free from delight in sinning to take unfailing delight in not sinning. For the first freedom of will which man received when he was created upright consisted in an ability not to sin, but also in an ability to sin; whereas this last freedom of will shall be superior, inasmuch as it shall not be able to sin (XXII.30).

And other influential medieval, including saints Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas, follow Augustin in affirming that the redeemed retain their freedom in heaven.[4] Of course, one is welcome to disagree with influential figures in one's tradition, particularly on issues that are not dogmatically established. But there's (admittedly defeasible) reason to not do so, particularly if one doesn't have to.

"Free but not upright and whole"

Another way of conceding to escape the tension at the heart of the Problem of Heavenly Freedom is to give up the other claim that leads to it. Just as the first form of concession involved denying that heaven involves free will, so too this form denies that heaven excludes the possibility of heavenly sin by the redeemed. A number of contemporary philosophers have also advocated this sort of view, but it's most sustained defense is by John Donnelly (1985 and 2006). According to Donnelly, free will is essential to the Christian view of heaven: "to think that when one attains heaven, due to the achievement of some degree of moral perfection, one no longer needs to be free, is to misunderstand the Christian notion of heaven" (Donnelly 1985, 27). But Donnelly thinks

[4] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III q.18 a.4; and Anselm, *On Free Will* and *De Concordia*, section I, chap. 6. Both of these latter works can be found in Anselm/Davies and Evans (1998).

that the redeemed can choose to use their free will in a way that violates their perfected union with God, thereby earning an "eviction from Heaven" (Donnelly 2006, 27).

Unlike the first form of concession strategy, this second form is consistent with a libertarian view of human freedom. Nevertheless, I think that there are reasons to reject this view as a response to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom. Simon Francis Gaine writes in a book entitled *Will There Be Free Will in Heaven?* that "that impeccability belongs to the orthodox Christian concept of heaven is . . . beyond any doubt" (2003, 11). And in a paper on the Problem of Heavenly Freedom that has sparked much of the existing literature, Yujin Nagasawa, Graham Oppy, and Nick Trakakis state that "it seems to us that the claim that there is evil in Heaven [or that there can be sin in heaven] simply runs counter to orthodox belief in these matters…. It is part of the essence of Heaven that it should be a place in which there is no evil" (2004, 104f and 99). If Donnelly is correct to hold that holding the redeemed are not free "is to misunderstand the Christian notion of heaven," it seems equally correct to say that affirming the possibility of heavenly eviction also misunderstands the Christian notion of heaven.

One way to see a problem with Donnelly's view is as follows. We might think that a person's being in a state of heavenly bliss is for that person to be in such an elevated state of bliss that they couldn't be in a higher state of bliss: heaven involves that bliss than which none greater can be conceived. Thinking that there could be eviction from heaven means thinking a redeemed individual could be in a higher state of bliss than they purportedly have in heaven. Augustine suggests this kind of response in his magisterial work, *The City of God*. Regarding the non–fallen angels, he writes:

> From all this, it will readily occur to anyone that the blessedness which an intelligent being desires as its legitimate object results from a combination of these two things, namely, that it uninterruptedly enjoy the unchangeable good, which is God; and that it be delivered from all dubiety, and know certainly that it shall eternally abide in the same enjoyment. For what catholic Christian does not know that no new devil will ever arise among the good angels, as he knows that this present devil will never again return into the fellowship of the good? For the truth in the gospel promises to the saints and to the faithful that they will be equal to the angels of God; and it is also promised them that they will 'go away into life eternal.' But if we are certain that we shall never lapse from eternal felicity, while they are not certain, then we shall not be their equals, but their superiors. But as the truth never deceives, and we shall be their equals, they must be certain of their blessedness (*City of God*, XI.13. See also IV.3, XI.4, XII.14 and XXI.17).

Considerations parallel to what Augustine says here regarding angels would equally apply to redeemed humans.

Heaven is supposed to be a place of ultimate happiness, and no state is a state of ultimate happiness if those in that state could be in a different state and be happier. Now, consider two 'redeemed' individuals (whether they're both angels or humans, I

don't think it matters). One experiences the joys of heaven but isn't sure that they will be with God forever, since heavenly eviction is a live possibility. The other experiences those same joys but also has assurance of guaranteed heavenly union with God for all future times. If we ask ourselves which of these two individuals is happier, clearly the certainty of eternal perfect union with God brings more happiness with would the lack of such certainty, *ceterus paribus*. So heaven precludes the possibility of future eviction; the eschatological destination of the redeemed on this view isn't a place of ultimate happiness, and hence is no heaven worthy of the name.

3. Avoiding Concessions

I don't think that the considerations against the concession strategies will be seen as decisive to all, particularly for those that don't think Church tradition carries as much authoritative and epistemic weight as I do. But I do think these considerations give us reason to prefer another response if one can be found, and if it doesn't come with worse implications for the rest of our philosophical and theological views.

Molinism Would Be Great, if it Worked

One could, for instance, adopt a Molinist–inspired solution. Suppose the following three things. Suppose that (a) Molinism is true; (b) humans have free will as understood by the libertarian, as is part of the Molinist's view; and (c) the redeemed in heaven retain their free will. On the basis of His middle knowledge, God could make sure that once in heaven, the redeemed will find themselves only in circumstances in which they will freely not sin given the true counterfactuals of creatures freedom about them. Let us call those circumstances which, were an agent to find themself in any of those circumstances they would freely not sin, 'sin–free circumstances'. Similarly, let us call those circumstances in which an agent would freely choose to do something sinful, 'sin–prone circumstances'. This response to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom, which utilizes but is not entailed by Molinism, is that on the basis of his middle knowledge, God providentially ensures that each of the redeemed finds themelve only in sin–free circumstances, and never in sin–prone circumstances. So while it is true that the redeemed can sin, given that they could exercise their free will in sinful ways, sinning is not a live possibility for the redeemed due to God's oversight—that is, their sinning is not compossible with the true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom and God's providential governance of the situations in which they'll find themselves. This view prevents there from being actual sin in heaven. But I think it's not strong enough to entail that the redeemed can't sin (on all relevant readings of 'can't'). I don't think this state of character is sufficiently strong for an individual's being fully upright and whole. Consider the case of Smith. Suppose that Smith is prone to adultery, or some other

vicious action. Smith's wife knows this about him. Suppose she knows the precise circumstances he would have to be in to commit adultery, or even freely will to commit adultery. Now suppose she is very good at keeping him out of these circumstances such that he is never again in adultery–prone circumstances. Extend the example a bit more and suppose that she knows what circumstances he would have to be in to perform any other sins as well. She also knows what circumstances he would have to be in to steal, for instance, and she keeps him out of those circumstances that would lead him to will freely to steal. Because of his wife's oversight, Smith is in a pretty good state. No matter where he finds himself, provided that his wife is watching over him, he won't sin. But would it be right to consider him chaste? Would we consider him morally perfect? No. He isn't transformed into a morally perfect individual in virtue of his being kept in sin–free circumstances, any more than a coward is rendered courageous by being kept away from the front lines.

Now, perhaps the Molinist will think that the kind of moral perfection sought after is too much to reasonably ask for. If one thinks that, and if one is a Molinist, then I see no reason not to endorse the above proposed solution to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom. Granted, Molinism can preserve heavenly freedom and impeccability only if the relevant counterfactuals of creaturely freedom turn out to be a certain way for those who will be the redeemed. But so far as I can tell, this is on par with other commitments regarding the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that the Molinism is already committed to. So I don't think that this concern will be too worrying for the Molinist.

Unfortunately, I think that Molinism is false. And Molinism is the kind of claim, like libertarianism or compatibilism, that is necessarily false if false (and necessarily true if true). I think there are two interrelated reasons for rejecting Molinism, neither of which are novel to me. (Though I'm not sure that the second reason I give below is fully developed in the philosophical literature.)

My first reason for rejecting Molinism is a version of what William Lane Craig (2001) calls 'the grounding objection,' because it focuses on what grounds the truth of the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that are at the heart of the Molinist's view. According to Molinism, the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that are the objects of God's middle knowledge are contingent truths and known (and thus true) logically prior to God's volition to create. But I think that any true contingent proposition needs something that explains *why* it is true—that is, it needs a ground of its truth. Prior to God's creative act, there is only God and the realm of necessary truths (including the necessary truths about *possibilia*). The counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are pre–volitional, so God is not their ground. Insofar as they are contingent, they are also not grounded in necessary truths. So why are they true, given that they don't have to be true? The answer given by most Molinists is that they're a brute fact. Tom Flint, himself perhaps the influential proponent of Molinism, admits that "the conclusion that seems forced upon us, then, is that *nobody* actually causes the counterfactuals to be true" (Flint

1998, 125). But given the explanatory weight they must shoulder and what seems to be the fact that contingent truths need a ground, I think brute counterfactuals of creaturely freedom cannot bear the weight of the Molinist system. More recently, Flint suggests that the Molinist further needs to find a way to understand the counterfactuals but on which "we couldn't have counterfactual power over God's causation of counterfactuals;" and while he thinks this could be done, "it is admittedly a task that no Molinist has yet fully offered" (Flint 2009, 278).

In his 2009 treatment, Flint also suggests that Molinists can offer two general response to the grounding objection. If we take the grounding objection to be akin to a shout at the Molinist that "Your Counterfactuals are Ungrounded!" these two kinds of responses can be thought of as the "Are So!" and "So What?" responses (Flint 2009, 279). Flint's claim above that the counterfactuals aren't caused to be true or are not 'true in virtue' of anything else is a version of the "So What?" response, and his more recent 2009 treatment suggests that he still prefers this approach to an "Are So!" response. I can't, in the present context, argue that no version of the "So What?" response is adequate. Nor can I argue that no version of the "Are So!" response is adequate either. All I can do at present is state that I'm not aware of any version of either strategy that strikes me as both plausible and successful. But not much follows about a view's truth from the fact that it doesn't strike me as both plausible and successful. It may be that what we have here is what John Martin Fischer refers to as a 'dialectical stalemate' (Fischer 2006, 166f). It may still be worthwhile to avoid Molinism even if considerations related to the grounding objection result in a dialectical stalemate and not a refutation.

My second reason for rejecting Molinism is that one can argue from the truths of the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom to the conclusion that humans lack free will (again, assuming a libertarian conception of free will). One of the most forceful arguments for incompatibilism is the Consequence Argument. At the heart of the Consequence Argument is a 'transfer of powerlessness principle'. While the exact form of the transfer principle is open to some debate, I (and most incompatibilists) think there is some valid form of the transfer principle. The basic idea is that if I'm powerless about (that is, not free with respect to) X, and I'm powerless about the conditional if X then Y, then I'm powerless about (again, not free with respect to) Y.[5]

For the Molinist, the initial circumstances that a human agent is in aren't up to them. And, given that they're not the ground for the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, the true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom about what they will do in those circumstances also aren't up to them. Therefore, via the transfer of powerless principle, what they do in those circumstances isn't up to them. And this is true whether we're talking about heavenly circumstances or circumstances they'll encounter in the present earthly life. Therefore, those agents are not free with respect to what they do, and they

[5] See van Inwagen (1983) and Campbell (2016).

lack free will. So I don't think that Molinism can secure its high level of providential control while maintaining libertarian freedom given concerns related to the consequence argument.

Freedom and Sinlessness without Molinism

In this section, I want to present a view that doesn't involve concession, but also doesn't require some of the metaphysical commitments of Molinism, as another way to respond to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom. It's a view according to which a person's moral character puts constraints on what they can freely will. (The view is further elaborated and defended elsewhere; see Pawl and Timpe 2009, 2013, and 2017 for the full treatment.) Once the view is on the table, I end with a brief discussion of how redeemed individuals on this view are, in one sense, *more* free despite their being unable to do certain actions.

On this view, there is a close connection between an agent's exercise of free will and what they perceive to be the good. Perceiving something as good gives the agent a motivational reason, though certainly a defeasible one, to pursue that thing if possible. (In general, I don't think the connection between free will and the good requires us to have specifically moral goodness in mind. In general, it merely requires a belief that the thing is good in the generic sense of the term, recognizing and accepting that goodness comes in many forms: intrinsic, instrumental, moral, pleasurable, etc. . . . Here I follow Judith Jarvis Thomson, who writes that "when people say about a thing 'That's good', what they mean is always that the thing is *good in some way*" (2001, 17).)

Leaving out some complexities that I don't think need concern us at present, I think the following claim, which elsewhere I've called the `reasons–constraint on free choice', is true (see Timpe 2013, chapter 2 for a full discussion):

> *Reasons–constraint on free choice*: If, at time *t*, *A* has no motivational reasons for *X*–ing, then *A* is incapable, at *t*, of freely choosing to *X*.

Our moral character impacts what we can, and do, freely choose to do via the reasons–constraint on free choice.

John Kronen and Eric Reitan write, for example, that "moral character influences, often decisively, what one does or does not do. In other words, one's moral character gives rise to motives for actions, the totality of which excludes some actions, permits others, and necessitates still others" (2010, 201). I agree. But there are at least two different ways in which an agent's various moral character traits can shape what she

freely chooses to do.[6] One's character directs one's exercise of free will both by influencing what they see as reasons for actions and influencing how they weigh their reasons, in the sense of rank–ordering the various reason they have. To put this point a slightly different way: in making free decisions, one's character traits affect both the weights and the scale. Both of these aspects can be seen as follows. First, given my present moral character I can see no good in torturing a child for a nickel (i.e., I judge that a nickel is not a good reason for willing such an action). Furthermore, when I weigh the good of having a nickel against the goods of the child's bodily and psychological integrity, I easily and clearly decide that the child's welfare wins. My character is involved insofar as if I were more avaricious, I might find monetary gain, even small monetary gain, a good reason to inflict bodily harm on another. Similarly, if I were less empathetic, I may weigh the good of monetary gain more heavily than I do against the good of an innocent child's welfare. Since we freely choose to do only things that we think we have some reason to do, our character affects our free choices by affecting both the weight or strength we assign to reasons, and by affecting the scale by which we compare a reason or set of reasons for acting one way against a reason or set of reasons for acting another.

Given this fact, as well as the fact that individuals' moral character change over time, agents may develop their moral character in such a way that, given how they evaluate and compare their reasons, there may be actions which they no longer sees as good in any way at a particular time, even though other agents may see good reason to perform that same action at that time. Furthermore, what we see as being a good reason for acting in a particular manner can change. Our characters may be such that we are simply no longer capable of freely choosing certain courses of action without our character first changing from what it presently is. Why this is will be related to the reasons–constraint on free choice introduced earlier. Over time, agents' performance of certain actions, and the lack of performance of others, will become more and more natural for them to do, or not do, given their character. As a person's moral character develops even further, they may come to no longer have any reason for choosing a particular course of action, and in this kind of case they will be incapable of freely choosing to perform those actions. Nevertheless, the agent may freely do a particular action even though it is no longer possible in the relevant sense, given their moral character, for them to freely refrain from performing that action. But, as I've tried to argue, this view is is entirely consistent with libertarian accounts of free will.

Consider two claims that Thomas Talbott finds libertarians making:

> The correct claim is this: No action that can be traced back to a sufficient cause external

[6] There is a third way in which an agent's moral character can affect their exercise of free will, and that is via weakness of will; however, I set this issue aside here.

> to the agent is truly free. The incorrect claim is this: An action is free only if it is logically and psychologically possible for the person who performs it to refrain from it. The latter claim seems to me inconsistent not only with Christian theology, but with widespread intuitions about the nature of moral character as well. In a very real sense, the measure of one's moral character—the measure of one's love, for instance—is just the extent to which certain actions are no longer possible (Talbot 1988, 17).

On the view outlines here, an agent's character directs decisions by both influencing what they see as reasons for actions and influencing how they weigh reasons for and against those actions. At a sufficiently development of perfecting our character, any vicious or sinful action would appear so repugnant that we just couldn't bring ourselves to do them. The incapability here should be understood along the lines of psychological impossibility, where it is psychologically impossible for *S* to do *A* at *t* if, given all the psychological facts about the agent at time *t*, *S* is unable to freely choose *A*. (In slightly different contexts, Harry Frankfurt talks about 'volitional necessity' and Bernard Williams speaks of 'moral incapacity'. I think that both of these ideas are close to the kind of inability I have in mind here.)

Recently Jesse Couenhoven has written that "supremely free persons are so virtuous they cannot be otherwise—they live a life of wisdom that has as its flip side the incapacity to be anything other than good. They may sometimes make undetermined choices but that is no necessary part of their freedom" (2012, 403). One can affirm this without also affirming Couenhoven's commitment to compatibilism. This is because of the reasons–constraint on free choice and its interaction with the character that the redeemed allow for us to be free and yet unable to do certain things, given the character they formed in their pre–heavenly existence. Given the perfection of their character, they will see no reason to engage in sinful and wicked actions. But being unable to do some action because you don't see any reason for performing it doesn't mean that you lack free will with respect to that action.

On this picture, a person perfectly united with God in heaven would never freely sin. They could retain the ability to freely choose between a range of actions that they could choose, but the range of choices they are capable of making would be circumscribed—even if not fully—by the moral characters that they have previously formed. So we have a way to defend heavenly sinlessness, even given a commitment to a libertarian understanding of free will, without needing to endorse the purportedly problematic requirements of Molinism.

4. Being 'More Free' by Being Able to Do Less

Finally, let me quickly suggest that there is at least one way that the redeemed are 'more free' despite their inability to do certain actions. In Christian theology, humans are

created in the image of God. In the perfect being theological tradition that characterizes much of Christian tradition and on which I'm drawing in this paper, God is necessarily morally perfect. I think that there's a way to reconcile such a view of the divine nature with God's being free. Elsewhere, I've even argued that the primary sense of free will is what we find in the case of God—true freedom has its source in the outflowing of a good moral character, one which need not have the ability to do otherwise, particularly the ability to do evil, in order to be free (see Timpe 2016. There are, of course, disanalogies between human heavenly freedom and divine freedom; all the present argument needs is that there are similarities that show free will doesn't require being able to do anything sinful and the lack of external determinism; both of these are secured in the comparison).

While I agreed with part of Couenhoven's view, as indicated above, he and I differ with respect to how we should understand aspects of divine freedom. He writes:

> A libertarian conception of divine freedom is unattractive, then, because it turns God's very greatness into a liability; their necessary perfections limit the freedom of the triune persons. Libertarian accounts also undercut the praise of God's essential perfections, and whatever necessarily follows from them, that is common among believers.… Libertarian accounts of divine freedom have the strange implication that God's perfect goodness and infinite and certain knowledge not only do not enhance but are actually at odds with divine freedom (Couenhoven 2012, 410 and 417).

It should be clear now that I don't think any of these criticisms hit their mark. God's inability to sin isn't a liability that undercuts His perfection, but rather is wholly consistent with His perfection. Insofar as God's goodness doesn't threaten His freedom, there is no reason to think that He's not praiseworthy, and thus deserving of praise, for His goodness.

So I disagree with Couenhoven that a libertarian understanding of divine freedom has the negative implications that he thinks it would. However, there are other aspects of his treatment of divine freedom that I think are importantly right. Drawing on the work of Augustine, Coenhoven writes:

> Divine freedom … offers the strongest argument against conceiving of freedom as limited by the necessities of perfection. Just as God cannot make a round square or a rock too heavy for the Trinity to lift, because being "constrained" by reason is a higher kind of ability and power than being "unlimited" by it, so divine freedom expresses itself in an "inability" to sin. It is greater for God to be unable to sin, the necessity of happiness being more perfect than the "capacity" to choose the unhappy… The necessity of perfection is not external, forced on God, but arises from God's own nature, since God is the greatest conceivable being, and cannot change (Couenhoven 2012, 400f).

We can distill the following characteristics of divine freedom from this quotation:

1) divine freedom expresses itself as an inability to sin;
2) divine freedom is more perfect for including the inability to choose sin; and
3) the inability to choose sin is intrinsic to God's nature, rather than being imposed by something else on the divine nature.

Couenhoven is right that a satisfactory account of divine freedom should include these three characteristics. I affirm that they're true. I just deny that they're incompatible with libertarianism. It is because of the third characteristic that the inability to sin is not a limitation on God's freedom. In fact, it's an expression of it. The right form of libertarianism can secure each of these characteristics. That is, I think that God's freedom could be characterized as Couenhoven does here even if compatibilism is false.[7] Not only can one account for these characteristics of God's freedom on the kind of libertarian view I've outlined, but one can also see that God's freedom is the most perfect freedom there can be. And I think it should be clear that the freedom of the redeemed is the closest expression of human freedom to divine freedom. God's freedom is "the ground of perfect freedom" (Couenhoven 2012, 397) and the perfected freedom of the redeemed is a reflection of the former.[8] In this sense, even if their freedom doesn't allow them to do more quantities of actions than others, they still have a more perfected freedom. Forming the kind of character that rules out morally bad actions is one way that we can become more like God.[9]

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[7] In the contemporary free will literature, most compatibilists think that while free will is compatible with the truth of determinism, it is also compatible with the falsity of determinism. See Timpe (2012, chapter 10). One reason for Couenhoven to grant that the above desiderata of divine freedom can be satisfied by the incompatibilist is so that his account of divine freedom doesn't *require* the truth of determinism. In this sense, Couenhoven should be grateful for the above account.

[8] If this is correct, then one could use this general approach to give an account of the Incarnate Christ's freedom; see Pawl and Timpe (2016).

[9] A previous version of this paper was presented at the University of York in the UK, where I benefited from a very vigorous discussion. I'd especially like to thank David Worsley and David Efird for the invitation and their constructive insights. Katrina Haagsma and two anonymous referees for the journal also provided very useful feedback on the penultimate version of the paper.

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